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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Intersessional expert meeting to consider gaps in, challenges to and best practices aimed at the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls and the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 36/8 on the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls and the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In that resolution, the Council requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to organize a two-day intersessional expert meeting to consider gaps in, challenges to and best practices aimed at the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls and the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and to prepare a report on the outcome of that meeting for presentation to the Council at its thirty-ninth session. The expert meeting was held in Geneva on 2 and 3 May 2018.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 36/8, the Human Rights Council requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in collaboration with Member States, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, international human rights mechanisms, civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders, to organize a two-day intersessional expert meeting to consider gaps in, challenges to and best practices aimed at the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls and the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Council also requested the High Commissioner to prepare a report on the outcome of the meeting and to present it to the Council at its thirty-ninth session.

2. The intersessional expert meeting was held on 2 and 3 May 2018 in Geneva. Sixteen experts attended the workshop, while one expert, who could not physically attend the meeting, shared her presentation. The meeting was open to observers, including Member States, civil society organizations, United Nations agencies and academics. In the present report the High Commissioner summarizes the discussion held by the experts, interventions made by observers and promising practices shared at the meeting.

3. The discussion at the expert meeting built on existing assessments and used illustrative examples of areas where the integration of a gender perspective could be strengthened. In the discussion, participants linked a number of Sustainable Development Goals across the three dimensions — economic, social and environmental — of the 2030 Agenda through the lenses of women's rights and gender equality. The experts made suggestions on how to integrate a gender perspective in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and ensure that efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals promoted women's rights and gender equality. They also made recommendations on how to enhance synergies across the United Nations system and with other multilateral actors in efforts to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in a way that promoted women's rights and gender equality. The agenda, concept note and the full presentations by the experts are available on the website of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).[1]

II. Setting the context

4. In General Assembly resolution 70/1 on the 2030 Agenda, adopted by consensus by all States Members of the United Nations, States committed to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, recognizing that gender inequality remained an immense challenge for sustainable development. States also recognized that realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls would make a crucial contribution to progress across all the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda and that the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda was crucial. States also reaffirmed the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments relating to human rights and international law and called for the new agenda to be implemented in a manner that was consistent with the rights and obligations of States under international law.

5. At the intersessional meeting, experts acknowledged that the 2030 Agenda had goals and targets that were integrated and indivisible, global in nature and universally applicable; focused on sustainability, equality, peace and human progress, which could provide a powerful counter-narrative to the rise of extremism, conflict and environmental degradation; pledged to leave no one behind, which challenged the trend of deepening

[1] See www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/SystematicMainstreamingIntersessionalMeeting.aspx.

inequalities within and across countries; and placed people at the centre. In other words, the 2030 Agenda could be seen as an operational plan for realizing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

6. At the same time, a recent review by UN-Women of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda based on robust statistics and new analysis had revealed the persistence of pervasive gender inequalities in every dimension of sustainable development, across all countries and regions, and had shown that in many areas progress remained too slow to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.[2] In that context, the experts stressed that gender-based inequality and its interactions with other inequalities, including those based on sexual orientation, ethnicity, indigenous status, disability and age, should be thoroughly challenged and disrupted throughout the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

7. To that end four key areas for action were suggested:

(a) Improving monitoring of progress made for women and girls by strengthening gender statistics and supporting national statistical systems, including with regard to 6 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals that lacked gender-specific indicators;[3]

(b) Placing gender equality at the centre of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through gender-transformative policies;

(c) Closing the financing gap for gender equality;

(d) Strengthening accountability for gender equality commitments at all levels.

8. In relation to the first key area, participants recognized that it was crucial not to roll back on hard-won gains made under the Millennium Development Goals process, including in the area of sexual and reproductive health and rights, while advancing on gender equality and the rights of women and girls throughout the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its goals, in line with its key principles of indivisibility and comprehensiveness.

9. In her opening statement, the Deputy High Commissioner pointed out that people across the globe were amplifying their voices through social media — sometimes creatively and sometimes destructively. That new mode of engagement was happening far beyond the immediate reach of formal political representatives and was increasing the role of non-State actors, such as private actors, traditional actors and civil society actors. She questioned how the participation of women and girls, as active agents for development, could be ensured in that dynamic.

10. Several experts underlined the importance of demography. Currently, the world was witnessing the largest generation of young people in history, with 90 per cent of the young people concentrated in poorer countries. They were the ones who tended to be left out the most in decision-making. The impact on the lives of children and young people, in particular girls, would be a litmus test for the success or failure of the 2030 Agenda.

11. Lastly, participants emphasized that women and girls were not a homogeneous group and it was important to focus on women and girls who were most marginalized owing to the intersecting forms of discrimination they faced. Likewise, it was recognized that human beings were composed of a wide spectrum of gender identities, and thus the scope of gender equality should be understood to cover equality not only for heterosexual women and men, but also for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and other non-binary persons.[4]

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[2] UN-Women, *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (New York, 2018).

[3] In its report, UN-Women identified that Goals 6 (clean water and sanitation), 7 (affordable and clean energy), 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), 12 (responsible consumption and production), 14 (life below water) and 15 (life on land) lacked gender-specific indicators.

[4] Also see Human Rights Council resolution 32/2; Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19, para. 12; and Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural

III. Integration of women's rights and a gender perspective in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda across the social, economic and environmental dimensions

12. One segment of the discussion was devoted to the analysis of the linkages between the three dimensions — economic, social and environmental — of the 2030 Agenda through the lenses of gender equality and women's rights. The experts presented how gender equality and women's rights were relevant to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in particular in areas where gender-responsive implementation and monitoring might remain weak, such as the management of natural resources and industrial activities, patterns of production and consumption, urbanization and the environment and ecosystems.

13. One expert discussed the role of women in agricultural productivity, notably highlighting why realizing women's rights was important for sustainable production, the environment and climate action, based on experience in Eastern Africa. Improving sustainable and climate-smart agricultural productivity by closing the gender gap would contribute to Sustainable Development Goals 1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger), 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality), 6 (clean water and sanitation), 7 (affordable and clean energy), 8 (decent work and economic growth), 12 (responsible consumption and production), 13 (climate action) and 15 (life on land). Agricultural output growth had a strong causal impact on poverty reduction and food security. Nevertheless, agricultural productivity had been negatively affected by gender inequalities, which had resulted in large losses for local economies and Governments as a whole. For example, in Malawi, closing the gender gap could lead to more than 238,000 people being lifted out of poverty each year.

14. In sub-Saharan Africa, women comprised 30 to 80 per cent of the active farming population, and yet they were consistently found to be less productive than male farmers owing to a range of constraints. Studies found that elements that hindered women's agricultural productivity included unequal access to key agricultural inputs such as land, knowledge, fertilizer and improved seeds; lack of access to hired labour because of prevalent cultural norms that did not allow women to hire male workers; time constraints faced by women owing to their unpaid care and domestic work; and gender-based violence against women. In order to improve agricultural productivity, gender-responsive policy measures would be required. Such measures might need to transform gender social norms in agricultural activities by involving women in policy formulation and implementation, empowering women through knowledge and skills and building the capacities of women to manage their finances and engage men as partners. Measures could be required to improve women farmers' access to and the use of labour-saving technologies for agricultural production and for household use, including improved access to water and clean energy. Gender-responsive climate-smart agricultural extension services would have to be provided to women. Measures might also be required to improve women's access to and control over land and other resources, including improved seeds, fertilizers and financial resources. Finally, gender-disaggregated data should be collected and statistical instruments should be improved.[5]

15. One expert highlighted the importance of having a strong focus on gender equality in harnessing the demographic dividend in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It would be a crucial element for policies relevant to economic growth, social protection and social services, urbanization, natural resource management and climate responses. The demographic dividend was created by a decline in fertility, the subsequent decrease in the size and proportion of the young population and an increase in the working age population.

Rights general comment No. 20 (2009) on non-discrimination in economic, social and cultural rights, para. 32. In the context of freedom from violence, also see Human Rights Committee general comment No. 35 (2014) on liberty and security of person, paras. 3 and 9.

[5] For more details on the policy recommendations, see the report "The Cost of the Gender Gap in Agricultural Productivity in Malawi, Tanzania, and Uganda" and the policy brief, "Equally Productive? Assessing the Gender Gap in Agricultural Productivity in Rwanda".

With preparation and the right policies, the demographic dividend could positively transform countries with the potential for long-term development. It could provide a window of opportunity to create productive employment, increase human capital investment in younger generations and empower people, in particular girls, and promote their well-being. It was pointed out that the opportunity was coming for a demographic dividend in many countries, particularly in Africa.

16. Nevertheless, the demographic dividend was not a given; it required the right policies. Without appropriate policies, a decline in fertility and an increase in the female workforce might merely lead to more exploitation of women workers. No country had ever achieved the demographic dividend without significant and long-term policy commitments with a strong focus on gender equality. Necessary policy measures included empowering people, especially women and young girls, in order to make the best choices for themselves and their families; ensuring that women and couples had access to family planning services and had the rights and freedoms to make their own reproductive choices; and supporting young women to enjoy equal opportunities with men in education and employment.[6] Such measures had to be accompanied by efforts to eliminate harmful practices — such as child, early and forced marriages, female genital mutilation and gender-based violence against women and girls — and to promote the realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

17. One expert underscored the contribution of indigenous women to the sustainable development of their peoples and the planet. Indigenous women were protecting biodiversity and ecosystems and taking climate action by protecting lands and the environment in their traditional territories, protecting indigenous seeds and applying their knowledge in the context of climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. Those actions were relevant to the achievement of Sustainable Goals 13 (climate action) and 15 (life on land). indigenous women should be recognized as agents for change and their contributions and knowledge should be recognized, protected and respected.

18. In recent years, analysis and guidance had been developed on integrating a gender perspective and women's rights in responses to climate change. In its general recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women noted that climate change was exacerbating the risks and impact of disasters globally by increasing the frequency and severity of weather and climate hazards. Situations of crisis exacerbated pre-existing gender inequalities and also compounded intersecting forms of discrimination against, inter alia: women living in poverty; indigenous women; women belonging to ethnic, racial, religious and sexual minorities; women with disabilities; refugee, asylum-seeking, internally displaced, stateless and migrant women; rural women; single women; adolescent girls; and older women. Those persons were often affected disproportionately as compared with men or other women. On the other hand, gender-transformative responses to such disasters could present opportunities for rectifying existing gender inequality.

19. In its general recommendation No. 37, the Committee emphasized that it was important that responses to disasters promoted substantive equalities for women, in particular those who faced intersecting forms of discrimination, ensured participation and empowerment of women and girls and recognized women's legal capacity and promoted their access to justice. It also underlined the importance of gender analysis on issues such as health, social security and freedom from violence to identify the heightened risks women and girls faced due to their gender roles and discrimination in the family, community and society, and in addressing the root causes of such risks in disaster responses. The Committee also articulated States' extraterritorial obligations in disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change. Those recommendations provided guidance to States in implementing plans and policies to achieve, for example, Sustainable Development Goals

[6] For more details on the policy recommendations, see Global Agenda Council on the Demographic Dividend, "Harnessing the Opportunity of the Demographic Dividend", World Economic Forum, 2015.

11 (sustainable cities and communities) and 13 (climate action) in conjunction with Goal 5 (gender equality).

20. The experts also pointed out relevant work of the treaty bodies. For example, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had addressed issues such as the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including those resulting from fossil fuel extraction (see CEDAW/C/NOR/CO/9) and to protect the rights of persons displaced by climate change (see CEDAW/C/PHL/CO/7-8).[7] The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights had recognized that safe and clean drinking water and sanitation, energy, land and the environment were essential components of everyone's right to an adequate standard of living, including women and children. The Committee had also recognized the intergenerational nature of rights; in its general comment No. 15 (2002) on the right to water, the Committee emphasized that the right to water should be realized for present and future generations. An expert reported that two forthcoming general comments of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights would cover areas of the 2030 Agenda where further integration of gender analysis and gender-responsive or gender-transformative implementation would be required, namely sustainable development, the environment and economic, social and cultural rights and the right to land. Issues of gender equality and women's equal rights would be integrated into those two general comments and they would provide essential guidance for the States parties once adopted.

21. Some Member States shared information on their policies and programmes to advance gender equality in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. A representative of Angola noted the recent adoption of the 2018–2022 national development plan, which aimed at ensuring equal opportunities for men and women, combating environmental crises and implementing the 2030 Agenda. Likewise, a representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia stated that the Government's land programme had led to an increase in the number of women landowners.

22. The experts considered that strategic areas for prioritization to integrate gender equality and women's rights in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including for countries with limited resources, were the elimination of gender-based violence against women, including harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage; the equal distribution of unpaid domestic work; the elimination of harmful gender stereotypes and associated stigma; and the realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights, including in the context of the prevention of and response to HIV/AIDS. They also underscored the importance of focusing on the most marginalized groups of women and girls owing to the intersecting forms of discrimination they faced.

IV. Leaving no one behind: how can diversity and intersectionality be captured?

23. Leaving no one behind was the central, overarching commitment of the 2030 Agenda. Throughout the meeting, the experts underscored the importance of collecting disaggregated data that could capture the diversity of different groups of people, but also the intersectionality of different forms of discrimination they might face. Being counted in the monitoring of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda could be a decisive element for certain groups for being visible, and thus to their participation rather than being left behind. Groups that were not visible in the efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals would face the same risk of being made invisible in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Such groups included persons with disabilities; indigenous peoples; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and other non-binary persons; refugees; migrants; asylum seekers; internally displaced persons; people living in poverty; and people belonging to

[7] See also Center for International Environmental Law and the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, "States' Human Rights Obligations in the Context of Climate Change: Synthesis Note on the Concluding Observations and Recommendations on Climate Change Adopted by UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies".

ethnic, religious, linguistic and racial minorities — and in particular women and girls belonging to those groups.

24. The experts pointed out ongoing efforts to make the above-mentioned groups visible. At the national level, for example, the national statistics bureaux of South Africa and Kenya were applying a human rights-based approach to data[8] and collecting data to capture intersectional forms of discrimination. The national statistical bureau of South Africa collected data disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, religion, civil status and income/living standard. South Africa had also extended age ranges for data collection to 15 years and older, enabling the collection of data on older persons, including older women who were often excluded from the scope of development. In Kenya, data on persons with disabilities, including people living with albinism, and people belonging to ethnic minorities were collected. In addition to data disaggregation, both national statistical bureaux applied the principles of participation, transparency, privacy and accountability and, to a certain extent, the principle of self-identification. In order to facilitate the application of a human rights-based approach to data, the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics was collaborating with the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights.

25. At the regional level, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean was supporting the collection of disaggregated data and their analysis, including on intersecting forms of discrimination based on gender and other grounds, in particular race and indigenous status. An expert pointed out that during the past 20 years an increasing number of countries in Latin America had started to collect data on Afrodescendants and indigenous peoples. Intensive analysis had been made of the impact of intersecting forms of discrimination against indigenous and Afrodescendent women.[9] At the global level, efforts had also been made to collect data on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and gender non-conforming persons. For example, the UNDP "LGBTI Inclusion Index" aimed to measure to what extent lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons enjoyed access to opportunities and services and the outcomes of development in five areas, namely: health; economic well-being; personal security and violence; education; and political and civic participation.[10]

26. One of the key challenges faced in data collection was how to capture diversity among women and girls and the intersectionality of the discrimination they faced. For example, in Latin America alone 826 groups had identified themselves as indigenous peoples, and it was estimated that another 200 indigenous peoples might exist. While the principle of self-identification was one of the key principles of a human rights approach to data, not all people who faced discrimination owing to their perceived identity might recognize themselves as such. For example, persons living with a psychosocial disability, including older persons, might not identify themselves as persons with a disability. Non-binary or gender non-conforming people in different parts of the world might have different identities that did not fit within the categories of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and thus did not self-identify as such. Stigma and discrimination might also make people refrain from self-identifying themselves as belonging to marginalized groups. Capturing such diversity was a challenge, in particular in a resource-scarce context.

[8] See also the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Data: Leaving No One Behind in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (Geneva, 2018).

[9] See also see Economic Commision for Latin America and the Caribbean, *Mujeres indígenas en América Latina: dinámicas demográficas y sociales en el marco de los derechos humanos*, 2013; *Los pueblos indígenas en América Latina: Avances en el último decenio y retos pendientes para la garantía de sus derechos*, 2014; *Situación de las personas afrodescendientes en América Latina y desafíos de políticas para la garantía de sus derechos*, 2017; *Los pueblos indígenas en América (Abya Yala): desafíos para la igualdad en la diversidad*, 2018.

[10] For more details on the methodology, see www.worldbank.org/en/topic/socialdevelopment/publication/investing-in-a-research-revolution-for-lgbti-inclusion.

While too small a sample size might not be statistically significant, not capturing such diversity would likely mean that certain groups remained invisible and excluded.

27. Furthermore, several experts emphasized that the majority of women, girls and gender non-conforming persons belonging to marginalized groups were still made invisible and excluded in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Elements that hindered the participation of those women and girls and data collection on them included lack of citizenship; being in detention (including in penitentiary facilities, immigration centres, residential institutions and hospitals); being criminalized (for example, sex workers, drug users, undocumented migrants or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons); barriers in relation to infrastructure, transport, communication or information; and harmful stereotypes and discrimination. It was suggested that States might need to engage proactively with women and girls belonging to marginalized groups, as they might lack sufficient resources and representation in general processes of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

28. The experts pointed out that marginalized groups often had to insist on and fight for their recognition. Civil society organizations and organizations representing marginalized groups had a vital role to play in demanding such recognition. At the same time, views and positions on certain issues might be divided among organizations representing a particular group (such as organizations of persons with disabilities or representatives of indigenous peoples) and among organizations working on different issues (for example, women's rights, children's rights and the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons). Such divisions could undermine their collective mobilization. More dialogue might be needed among organizations representing marginalized groups themselves and more cooperation and collaboration among human rights organizations, women's organizations and organizations representing marginalized groups would be beneficial. In order to capture the diversity of various groups of women and girls, some experts underscored the need for intercultural and intergenerational dialogue and for the recognition of diverse world views held by different groups, including the concept of collective rights. The importance of cultural identity and cultural integrity was also noted.

V. Monitoring progress on gender equality and women's rights

29. The discussion on data also covered the issue of how to measure progress made on gender equality and the realization of women's rights in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

30. One expert emphasized that indicators identified for monitoring progress in reaching the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals focused on measuring progress in the condition of women and girls, such as their health status, but did not measure how their social positions had been improved. Unless the social positions of women and girls were improved, progress made on their condition would not be sustainable. For example, investing in reproductive health-care service delivery would not lead to sustainable access to such services by women and girls unless they gained an autonomous decision-making capacity and control over the social and financial resources to gain access to such services. As a methodology to measure gender-transformative outcomes of programmes, Plan International Canada had developed the Women and Girls Empowerment Index.[11] It measured changes directly associated with the root causes of gender inequality across five domains: roles and responsibilities; resource access and control; participation and decision-making; social norms; and institutional change. In order to measure gender transformative changes, changes in attitudes and perceptions concerning gender relations should be measured not only for women and girls but also for men and boys.

[11] See "Plan International Canada's Architecture for Gender Transformative Programming and Measurement: A Primer".

31. Other experts pointed to the discrepancy between the targets listed under each Sustainable Development Goal and the global indicators identified to measure the progress made under each target. Global indicators identified for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda were classified into three tiers depending on the level of methodological development and overall data availability.[12] For example, Tier I indicators were considered to be conceptually clear, had internationally established methodology and standards available, and data for the indicator were regularly produced by countries. In reality, Tier I indicators were the only ones that most States would be reporting on.

32. According to UN-Women, only two global indicators identified for Goal 5 on gender equality were currently classified as Tier I. Those were indicators 5.5.2 (proportion of women in managerial positions) and 5.b.1 (proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex). Goal 10, which promised to reduce inequalities within and among countries according to the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, had only three Tier I indicators: 10.6.1 (proportion of members and voting rights of developing countries in international organizations); 10.a.1 (proportion of tariff lines applied to imports from least developed countries and developing countries with zero-tariff); and 10.b.1 (total resource flows for development, by recipient and donor countries and type of flow (such as official development assistance, foreign direct investment and other flows)). One expert stressed that, while many of the Sustainable Development Goal targets relevant to gender equality were quite comprehensive and in line with international human rights standards, if the accountability for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda was based mostly on statistical data and the current framework, most of the gains on gender equality or women's rights would not be reflected in the reporting. Some experts indicated the need to elaborate methodologies for indicators under Goal 5 currently classified under Tier II and Tier III so that they could be moved to Tier I. Others suggested not to be too bound by Tier I indicators and rather to use indicators that were available and most relevant in each country.

33. Some indicators used under the Millennium Development Goals had not been included in the global indicators identified for the 2030 Agenda. For example, the indicator on the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education and the indicator on enrolment in primary education — both of which were well established and widely used, including as one of the Millennium Development Goal indicators — had not been selected as Sustainable Development Goals indicators. They had not been selected as they were not sufficient to measure target 4.1 on free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education. The suggested indicator for that target reads:

> 4.1.1: Proportion of children and young people: (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex.

However, all those indicators were classified as Tier II or III, as methodologies had not been established or because data were not readily available. As a result, while the old and insufficient but existing enrolment indicators had been dropped, better measures to replace them were not yet available and, therefore, gender equality in primary and secondary education could not be reported.

VI. Role of the human rights mechanisms in strengthening accountability for the 2030 Agenda

34. The processes for the follow-up to and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals represented a step forward from the mechanisms for the Millennium Development Goals. The high-level political forum on sustainable development served as the main mechanism for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda at the global level. The 2030 Agenda also encouraged

[12] See United Nations, Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, "Tier Classification for Global SDG Indicators", 2018.

States to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and subnational levels that were country-led and country-driven, which were expected to serve as a basis for the regular reviews by the high-level political forum. Those review processes were to be open to participation by various stakeholders. And yet, all reporting of States was voluntary and the space for participation by actors other than States remained limited. In that context, the experts discussed the potential role of national and international human rights mechanisms in strengthening accountability for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

35. At the national level, the experts highlighted the role of national human rights institutions. The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics and the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights had signed a memorandum of understanding in 2017 to mainstream a human rights-based approach to data in official statistics. Such collaboration had raised awareness on mainstreaming a human-rights based approach to data and had resulted in the identification of groups and individuals being "left behind" in the monitoring of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

36. In Azerbaijan, the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights had developed indicators to track progress by the Government in meeting its human rights obligations in relation to sexual and reproductive health.[13] Those indicators had been developed on the basis of the most recent recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and in the context of the universal periodic review of the Human Rights Council in six areas: reproductive health information and services; abortion; maternal health; violence against women; comprehensive and age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights; and HIV/AIDS. The Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights had reached an agreement with the Government to update the indicator matrix biannually.

37. Participants noted that the process of voluntary national reporting was gaining traction;[14] it had generated debate and political commitment at the national level and had legitimized the interaction of women's groups and civil society at large with government authorities. In that context, the experts suggested that it would be crucial that national review processes were informed of country-specific recommendations on gender equality and women's rights issued by the international human rights mechanisms and that national human rights institutions could play a key role in integrating such recommendations in the monitoring of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the national level.

38. At the international level, the review process of the high-level political forum on sustainable development was not compulsory and did not provide feedback such as observations or recommendations. At the forum, time allocated for substantive examination and discussion, and for the participation of civil society organizations and rights holders, was very limited. In that context the United Nations human rights mechanisms, such as the universal periodic review process and the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, and the human rights treaty monitoring bodies, could play a key role in strengthening accountability for implementing the 2030 Agenda. The experts emphasized that the regular review processes of the human rights mechanisms were well informed by inputs not only from States but also from civil society organizations, national human rights institutions and other actors, and that the recommendations generated from their country reviews could complement the review processes for the 2030 Agenda. Thematic analysis and guidance developed by those mechanisms would also be useful for various stakeholders, including States, business enterprises and civil society organizations, to advance the 2030 Agenda in accordance with international human rights standards.

39. Many treaty bodies were making efforts to ensure their recommendations could be more easily used to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals. For example, the

[13] See the report by the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the United Nations Population Fund, "Assessment of the implementation status of treaty body recommendations on sexual and reproductive health and rights in the Republic of Azerbaijan", Baku, 2015. Available at http://azerbaijan.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/A4_eng.pdf.

[14] As at 21 June 2018, 141 reports have been submitted. See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/.

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was developing a set of questions for the States parties that would enable them to report on whether they respected, protected and fulfilled the human rights of women in accordance with the articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and at the same time to track progress on target 5.1 and global indicator 5.1.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Since 2016, the Committee had regularly submitted contributions to the high-level political forum on sustainable development.[15] In 2017, the Committee, together with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, the Working Group on the elimination of discrimination against women in law and in practice and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights Rapporteurship on the Rights of Women, had issued a joint statement on the consideration of Sustainable Development Goal 5 by the high-level political forum.[16] Several treaty bodies had established internal working groups to discuss linkages between the treaty they monitored and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and had started to include on a regular basis any recommendations referring to the Sustainable Development Goals in their concluding observations. In their general recommendations and general comments, the treaty bodies also provided analysis and guidance on linking gender equality and women's human rights with the Sustainable Development Goals.

40. With regard to the universal periodic review process, assessments conducted by UNFPA revealed that 26 per cent of the recommendations made during the first cycle (2008–2012) pertained to gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights, and that 77 per cent of those recommendations had been formally accepted by the Member States concerned. During the second cycle (2013–2017), the percentage of recommendations relevant to sexual and reproductive health and rights among all recommendations had increased to 28 per cent. Of those recommendations, by far the highest number regarded gender equality and gender-based violence, with the number of recommendations in those two areas combined (5,000) doubling from the first to the second cycle. Furthermore, 63 per cent of States had reported having taken action on at least three quarters of the recommendations on sexual and reproductive health and rights received during the first cycle. The review process therefore offered a huge opportunity for ensuring accountability and tracking progress made by States, including progress made in the context of the 2030 Agenda, for example in relation to the achievement of Goals 3 (good health and well-being) and 5 (gender equality).

41. A study on the work of the special procedure mandate holders indicated that their work could also strengthen accountability for the 2030 Agenda. In their thematic reports, special procedure mandate holders analysed the relevance and complementarity of international human rights standards and the Sustainable Development Goals and identified gaps and challenges. For example, the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises was currently developing guidance to assist both States and business enterprises with practical recommendations on protecting, respecting and remedying the rights of women in a business context in accordance with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.[17] Similarly, country visits of the mandate holders could provide unique opportunities to bridge normative work and practical, operational aspects of the implementation of human rights in the context of the 2030 Agenda at the national level.[18]

42. In order to maximize the potential contribution of the United Nations human rights mechanisms to strengthening accountability for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

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[15] See www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CEDAW/Pages/ContributionHLPFSustainableevelopment.aspx.

[16] Available from www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21858&LangID=E.

[17] See, "Gender lens to the UNGPs", available at www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Business/Pages/GenderLens.aspx.

[18] For more details, see Christophe Golay, *No One Will Be Left Behind: The Role of United Nations Human Rights Mechanisms in Monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals That Seek to Realize Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, Academy Briefing No. 11 (Geneva, Switzerland, the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, 2018).

further efforts might be needed. Many experts expressed concerns about the disconnect between the discussions held in New York and in Geneva, in particular in the framework of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the human rights mechanisms, but also with respect to other United Nations entities based in New York and Geneva. One expert pointed out the lack of synergies among the global forums where discussions on the 2030 Agenda were held, for example, between the United Nations human rights mechanisms based in Geneva, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues based in New York and regional conferences on women, population and development. Strengthening synergies and coherence among the approaches adopted by different United Nations treaty bodies might also be useful.

43. Experts also acknowledged the need for the United Nations human rights mechanisms to further develop guidance on certain issues, such as women's access to and control over resources, the human rights responsibilities of business enterprises and the extraterritorial obligations of States, including those of developed countries. Gender analysis should be further mainstreamed throughout the work of the human rights mechanisms, in particular for mechanisms without specific mandates on women's rights. In order to make that happen, the mechanisms would need to receive more information on relevant issues. Civil society organizations, including women's rights organizations, national human rights institutions and other actors would need to be supported in generating and reporting such information to the United Nations human rights mechanisms.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

44. There was a consensus during the expert meeting that gender equality and the human rights of women and girls were critical to all three dimensions — economic, social and environmental — of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda should advance gender equality and the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls. The realization of gender equality and the rights of women and girls were crucial elements for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including those relevant to the management of resources and production and to climate action.

45. Harnessing the demographic dividend would be a crucial element for achieving sustainable development. However, that could not be done without ensuring the enjoyment of human rights by women and girls, in particular their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

46. The experts suggested that strategic entry points to integrate a gender dimension in efforts to achieve various Sustainable Development Goals could be interventions addressing the elimination of gender-based violence against women, including harmful practices; the equal distribution of unpaid domestic work; the elimination of harmful gender stereotypes and associated stigma; and the realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

47. The experts underscored that women and girls were not a homogenous group and that it was crucial to focus on the most marginalized groups of women and girls who faced intersecting forms of discrimination, including young and older women. Furthermore, it was highlighted that gender equality should mean equality among all genders, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and non-binary persons. While challenges for capturing diversity were recognized, the experts agreed that if certain groups were not counted they would be made invisible and left behind in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

48. The experts acknowledged that gender-responsive indicators would be necessary for all the Sustainable Development Goals. In order to measure impacts on gender equality and women's rights, it was suggested to measure changes directly associated with the root causes of gender inequality in the following areas: roles and responsibilities; resource access and control; participation and decision-making; social norms; and institutional change. Such measurement should encompass not only changes in the perception and attitudes towards gender relations among women and girls but also among men and boys.

49. There was a consensus on the need to further strengthen accountability for implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The crucial role of civil society organizations in such efforts both at the national and international levels was underscored. At the national level, the experts also highlighted the important role of national human rights institutions and national statistics bureaux in facilitating the application of a human rights-based approach to data in monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including the active use of recommendations issued by international human rights institutions in such monitoring.

50. There was also a consensus that the United Nations human rights mechanisms, including the universal periodic review process, the special procedures and the human rights treaty bodies, had a great potential for enhancing accountability for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and their analyses, guidance and regular country review processes could facilitate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in accordance with international human rights law.

51. The following recommendations emanated from the discussion at the expert meeting:

(a) States should strive to advance gender equality and women's rights in all areas of the 2030 Agenda, taking into account the indivisibility of its three dimensions — economic, social and environmental;

(b) The United Nations human rights mechanisms should continue to analyse the gender perspective and women's rights in areas of the 2030 Agenda where integration of a gender perspective remains weak, and issue concrete recommendations and guidance on how to advance gender equality and to respect, protect and fulfil women's human rights in such areas. Such recommendations and guidance should elaborate on the human rights responsibilities of business enterprises and the extraterritorial obligations of States;

(c) Stakeholders involved in monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including States, international organizations, development partners and civil society organizations, should improve their monitoring methodologies in order to capture the diversity of women, girls and non-binary or non-gender conforming persons, address intersecting forms of discrimination they face and measure progress made on gender equality, by applying a human rights-based approach to data. Such efforts would require the free, active and meaningful participation of women, girls and non-binary or non-gender conforming persons belonging to marginalized groups throughout the monitoring processes;

(d) Stakeholders involved in monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including States, international organizations, development partners and civil society organizations, should develop and use gender-transformative indicators;

(e) Collaboration between actors working on measurement and statistics and actors working on human rights should be facilitated at the national and international levels, including between national statistics bureaux and national human rights institutions;

(f) National stakeholders, including national human rights institutions and national statistics bureaux, should be encouraged and supported in the active use of recommendations and guidance on the realization of gender equality and women's rights issued by international human rights institutions, such as the United Nations human rights mechanisms, in the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda at the national level, including in voluntary national review processes and any other national monitoring and evaluation processes;

(g) United Nations human rights mechanisms should strengthen interaction with the high-level political forum on sustainable development and with United Nations entities acting as lead agencies on global indicators for the Sustainable

Development Goals, including through information sharing, written submissions and statements;

(h) OHCHR and other United Nations entities should facilitate the access of relevant stakeholders to the recommendations of the United Nations human rights mechanisms pertinent to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including country-specific recommendations classified by the Sustainable Development Goal(s) to which they are linked made available through existing databases, such as the Universal Human Rights Index (http://uhri.ohchr.org/) developed by OHCHR and the "UPR-SDG Data Explorer" (http://upr.humanrights.dk/) developed by the Danish Institute for Human Rights. Such a compilation could also be shared with the high-level political forum on sustainable development;

(i) Member States, United Nations entities and global and regional mechanisms should strive to enhance synergies across discussions and initiatives relevant to the 2030 Agenda, including the discussions held in the framework of the United Nations human rights mechanisms, the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples;

(j) The high-level political forum on sustainable development should expand the space for civil society organizations, including women's rights organizations and feminist groups, to interact in its review process;

(k) Civil society organizations and organizations representing marginalized groups, including women's rights organizations, should strive to work together, have dialogues on any diverse views and positions they hold, and collaborate in order to mobilize representation for marginalized groups in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. These dialogues should be intercultural and intergenerational.